

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Monument Valley High School
P.O. Box 360008
Monument Valley, Utah 84536**

March 13, 2006



**Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Monument Valley High School
P.O. Box 360008
Monument Valley, Utah 84536**

March 13, 2006

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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**DIVISION OF
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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 13, 2006, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Monument Valley High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Patricia Seltzer is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Monument Valley High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Monument Valley High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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MONUMENT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

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Counseling

Janea Herrera Counselor

Support Staff

Alyce Barrett
Esther Begaye
Lula Bedonie
James Black
Richard Blackwater
Vee Cly
Macneal Crank
Polly Crank

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Powers Whiskers
Nicholette Wright

MONUMENT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Adadiilmil: Together, we can do it!

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We value:

Respect

- Everyone has a right to learn
- Everyone can learn
- Everyone has the right to be respected

Responsibility

- Families are essential partners in the education of their children
- Everyone has the responsibility to make a positive contribution to the school
- School success depends upon the excellence in effort and achievement
- The laws of the state and the nation should be followed

Safety

- Everyone has a right to be safe at school
- Positive and caring relationships will strengthen the learning environment

We believe everyone needs to develop lifelong learning skills that we can assist our Navajo students in learning how to make viable choices to enable them to be successful both on and off the reservation.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. John Goldhardt, Principal, Snow Canyon Middle School, Washington County
School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Tom Brown, Principal, Grand County High School, Grand County School District

Lynette Riggs, Assistant Principal, Sky View High School, Cache County School
District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

MONUMENT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Monument Valley High School is a public junior high/high school located on the Navajo Reservation in San Juan School District in southeastern Utah. Opened in 1983, Monument Valley High School has a population of 232 students, all Navajo, from the surrounding communities of Oljato, Halchita-Mexican Hat, Douglas Mesa, and Monument Valley.

Monument Valley High was built as a result of lawsuits filed against the school district in 1974, when it was determined that the district had a legal obligation to provide education for secondary school students on the Navajo reservation. In 1998, the original lawsuit was revisited and it was determined that the district had not met the requirements of the original lawsuit. As a result, consensus teams were formed to address concerns in the areas of curriculum, finances, special education, and heritage language programs. After five years of intense scrutiny by the consensus teams, it was determined that the district was making progress toward closing the achievement gap between the native and non-native students, and the consensus teams were disbanded. Several of the mandates of the consensus teams are still in place, including additional testing and close monitoring of the progress of the students determined to be ELL.

Tourism is the main industry for the community, but it is seasonal and unpredictable. Monument Valley hosts tourists from all over the world and continues to be the setting for numerous movies, commercials, music videos, and magazine advertisements. Most families have incomes far below the poverty level. The average yearly income for the area is \$8,000. In addition, 86 percent of the students qualify for free lunch and fee waivers.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The number of Navajo staff members, including teachers, has increased dramatically since the school opened in 1983. In addition, the profile indicates that student achievement levels have improved steadily. For example, the number of students meeting proficiency standards on the UBSCT exam has increased. There have also been increases in achievement level in 8th grade and 10th grade language arts, 7th grade math, Pre-algebra, Elementary Algebra, Geometry, Life Science, Earth Systems, and Biology.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Although all students are Navajo, it is still necessary to disaggregate data by gender, income level, ELL status, and special education status.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Include disaggregated grading and attendance data.
- Add data concerning what happens to students once they graduate from Monument Valley High School (college, technical training, military service, work, etc.).

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

There is evidence to indicate that the school included faculty, staff, parents, and students in the self-study process. Many parents and tribal officials have a vested interest in the school and were active participants in the self-study.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The self-study is honest and forthright. It provides an accurate picture of the school's current realities as well as the road the school will take to get to its ideal status. The Visiting Team was convinced that the school's stakeholders looked deeply at themselves (using appropriate data), and that they understand what means are necessary to facilitate positive change for student achievement.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Monument Valley High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

Students will be responsible citizens

Indicators:

- Use appropriate strategies to solve conflicts
- Understand and respect rights of self and others

Students will demonstrate critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making across the curriculum and in daily life

Indicators:

- Ability to set goals, evaluate progress and request help as needed
- Ability to solve problems and make healthy choices

Students will be able to express thoughts and ideas through verbal, written and artistic media and be able to listen, read and understand the communication of others

Indicators:

- Mastery of UBSCT, Six Traits, and other mandated assessments, art, and music projects and other curriculum-related projects

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The self-study process was an extension of collaboration that was in place at the school stemming from the consensus teams; thus, the school has a history of being open and up-front with the public and the community. The mission of the school goes to the root of the community by using a Navajo term *Adadiilmiil*, which translates loosely as “Together, we can do it!” Parents, community members, staff members, and, to a lesser extent, students worked together to develop a compelling mission for Monument Valley High School.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The beliefs, like the mission, were developed through collaboration between the community and school. The beliefs align with the mission and are directly correlated to student achievement.

- c) *To what extent do the school’s mission and beliefs align to support the school’s desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

Because the school followed the process appropriately, it was apparent to the Visiting Team that there was alignment among mission, beliefs, and the desired results of student learning.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The staff and administration utilize the State Core Curriculum in each content area, as well as the cultural heritage of the students, as the basis for what students should know, understand, and be able to do.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Students and teachers have a very close and nurturing relationship. Respect and courtesy flow both ways. Teachers seem to create a positive and friendly atmosphere in the classroom and elsewhere in the school. Cooperation between teachers and administrators is also very commendable.

The highly diverse and qualified faculty members work together by using the core standards as a basis for their instruction. However, as is the case with most rural schools, it is difficult to deeply unwrap the content standards due to the fact that each teacher is required to teach multiple grade levels and content areas.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Certainly, a portion of one day is not an adequate amount of time to see all classroom contexts and continuums. It was obvious, however, that the administration and staff were trying very hard to engage students and make the most of every learning opportunity. For example:

- Because a majority of the students do not have electricity or reading/writing materials at home, classroom work is designed to allow students to apply and practice their learned knowledge and skills while at school. This is an adaptation made so that students will be more successful in their learning.
- There is a conscious effort made by staff members to design culturally relevant learning experiences that build on existing contextual knowledge. The school's use of the male and female hogans and instruction

concerning desert sheep and agriculture systems support a dedication to indigenous education. A summer program is also employed which brings tribal elders to teach and reinforce Navajo life-ways.

- Despite the fact that there are so few teachers, the school still tries to offer many enrichment/remedial and elective courses: basic reading, art, music, Navajo culture-related courses, automotive courses, medical anatomy, etc.

The school expressed concern about the availability of too few upper-level classes. For many small, isolated high schools, online and EDNET-type courses are solutions to this problem. This type of work also helps students receive New Century scholarships that can financially guarantee a college degree. An increased focus on this area might help Monument Valley High School with this concern. This path does require technical support from the school district.

The school did not use NSSE rubrics to indicate “to what extent” the school actively engages students in learning. A focus group did, however, indicate that the school tries to adjust instruction and create a positive classroom climate to engage students. (“How” was not discussed by the group in the school’s document.) They did specifically indicate that they try to utilize hands-on experiences and field trips to achieve that end. The focus groups also indicated that a problem with student attendance existed (indicating a lack of engagement) and the scheduling of advisory periods and shortened Fridays were counterproductive to student attendance and learning.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The professional staff have received training on best practices and implemented the TESA and Math Matters programs. Teachers on staff know and employ ESL-friendly methods. An example of specific strategy use was witnessed in remedial reading classrooms. In one classroom, students were reading along with an engaging “books on tape” cassette. In another, the teacher was using specific behavior modification techniques that would help the students settle down enough to concentrate.

With 28 percent of the student body being identified as ELL, however, it is recommended that more staff members have ESL endorsements. (The district office can also support this effort.)

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Examples have already been mentioned. Summer programs and culture-related methods and content are impressive. Credit-recovery systems are also helpful, and more students are utilizing the state’s Electronic High School.

It should be mentioned that one opportunity the students have at Monument Valley High School is the accessibility of teachers. The teachers are something of a captive audience because most live at the school, but these individuals also demonstrated a willingness and good attitude about offering additional help to their students.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Several of the classrooms had some sort of class expectations or standards visible on the walls. Although time didn't allow for much teacher-visitor talk, that visual information showed that each teacher was concerned about creating clear expectations.

The school focus group results produced some conflicting opinions concerning this topic. Under the subheading/principle, "Assessments of student learning are based on clearly articulated and appropriate expectations for student achievement," they state a strength as being "Clearly articulated expectations exist within each departments." They use state CORE/CRT/UBSCT scores to provide guidance. As a limitation, however, they state, "Expectations for student achievement and performance standards are not fully developed." It does look like the school is developing and understanding of desired end results. The next steps are designing assessments (testing the end standards) and deciding how to teach students to attain those goals.

Rubrics are very helpful in determining where students are on a continuum; the students themselves are works in progress. The creation/adoption of those rubrics helps the school clearly define/conceptualize the desired end results, how to formatively and summatively measure those results, how to approach the teaching of those results, and how to re-teach and remediate to help the students progress. Work needs to be done in this area.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

The school focus group responded to this question by reporting that department teaching/testing was aligned to the State Core. That is a positive and appropriate statement.

To extend the intent and significance of the question, however, the following questions should be added:

- What are the departments' knowledge/skills/disposition performance standards?
 - If measuring performance is the goal, then what is the best method? A project? A performance? A portfolio?
 - Are formative measurements used that measure the progress of the learning process? (A rubric, for example, measures progress and clarifies expectations for ultimate goal attainment.)
- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

The school focus group wrote, "Needs of all students must be considered when designing measurements," and "Assessments fail to cover all the essential knowledge and skills that should be assessed." Certainly this response alludes to standardized tests, not school/department/classroom-designed tests that can be designed to measure particular competencies—even if they are different from national norms. In view of the fact that NCLB is not designed to accommodate cultural differences and competencies, it is doubly important that the Monument Valley High School design assessments that fit its own desired results of student learning.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The school principal, Mrs. Seltzer, had made an effort to hire highly qualified teachers with diverse backgrounds to enhance the learning experience of the students. In addition, a survey completed by the leadership focus group indicates that the administration has high expectations for students *and* staff. Mrs. Seltzer has implemented professional development and collaboration that is focused on student achievement.

There is still a need to recognize and celebrate academic achievement and to instill a culture that sees academic success in a positive way.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision-making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

Staff members live and work on the school campus, and therefore spend a lot of time together. They also collaborate on behalf of student learning and success. For example, the staff has been trained in how to use data and in effective literacy strategies. The staff is also involved in making decisions concerning policy

programs. However, the biggest challenge faced by the leadership is the high annual teacher turnover rate, which requires continual induction and retraining.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Full efforts are made to assess all students as a means to measure what has been learned. The data from these assessments (primarily CRTs, ITBS, and UBSCT) is well published and shared openly with the staff and the community. The counselor also shares this data with parents and students in SEOP meetings.

While there is effective use of state summative assessments, there is a need for training in the use of formative assessments and the assessment for learning so that teachers can use this data to drive instruction.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The Visiting Team was impressed with both the physical and emotional safety provided for students. The environment of the school is conducive to teaching and learning. The physical plant is clean and well maintained. Policies and support are in place for a safe school program, including a school resource officer. It is apparent that the school is managed and led in a skillful way.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources, which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs and school improvement efforts?*

The principal of the school is working to align all resources with the mission, beliefs, DRSLs and action plan. The data shows that student learning is improving, and the data from high stakes assessments such as the UBSCT show steady improvement.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The principal, Mrs. Seltzer, has developed a positive, trusting relationship with the Navajo community. Members of the community often come to her apartment during non-school hours to discuss school issues with her. The leadership of the tribe is fully involved with the school, as is an active Community Council and many volunteers, including many tribal elders that assist the school and help with the school's culture and language programs.

Community Building:

- a) *To extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

Efforts are made to teach community building both within the school and within the community. Teachers build community within the school by working and collaborating together on behalf of student learning. An example of community building includes the foster grandparents program. This program allows tribal elders to participate and work with students in the Navajo language and culture classes. In addition, there are many exchange groups from all over the world that come to the school to meet and learn from the students and the community.

It is difficult for many parents to participate at the school due to long distances and the cost of gas.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Although the school does not have an active PTA in the traditional sense, there is active participation from the community, and many efforts are made at the school to bring the community to the school. The school often hosts workshops and conferences, and groups from other areas often attend. The school has a history of participating in cultural exchange programs. The Visiting Team witnessed this during the site visit when a student group from British Columbia spent the day at Monument Valley High School. The school also sponsors a well-attended community health fair, and has participated in the Elderhostel program for 10 years.

However, a notable outreach effort to the community is the Family Resource Center. This facility is open to members of the community, allowing parents to come to the Center for showers, educational videos, books, and computer and phone use, as well as parenting tips and reading programs. The school library is also open to the public, since there is no public library in the area.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

For staff development training, the school has been using the TESA model. This is a teacher-change model based on expectation theory and the early research of Thomas Good and Jere Brophy. The program is designed to modify the way

teachers interact with students through heightened awareness of how perceptions affect their expectations. Advertisements for the program claim that use of the programs improves student academic performance, gender and diversity awareness, attendance, and classroom climate, and reduces student discipline problems. If the program can accomplish what it asserts, it would be a good match for the challenges that the Monument Valley High School staff faces. Monument Valley High School has invested much time and money in bringing TESA consultants to do training.

Certainly, bringing in trainers offers two-sided results. The principal felt the message was valuable, but that sometimes the “outsider” didn’t relate well enough to Monument Valley High School’s circumstances. The Visiting Team applauds the school’s thoughtful desire to find inservice that tries to address its unique needs.

Math Matters was also listed as an inservice model used by the Math Department. Program advertisements say that it addresses teachers’ knowledge and understanding of math as well as teachers’ ability to deliver effective standards-based instruction. Its focus is on low-performing schools and basic math concepts.

Again, the Visiting Team appreciates the efforts that are being made to improve student instruction and performance at Monument Valley High School. We wish to offer a challenge, however. Those programs are costly in terms of time and money. How has the inservice impacted the school? How do you know? Moving beyond anecdotal responses, how does your student achievement data support the continued use of these programs?

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

Setting aside regular time for staff inservice—which the school has done—is important. The Visiting Team wishes to suggest that the school modify its meeting times better to accommodate after-school activities. (The school’s focus groups mentioned this, as well.) For example, the staff might meet weekly, an hour prior to school starting—perhaps on a Tuesday. At the first of the month the school might hold a faculty meeting; the second week might be devoted to department meeting study; and the third and fourth weeks could be devoted to faculty inservice. Choosing Friday for early release tends to reward the staff members for their hard work that week. Whichever day is usually affected the most by sporting events could be another likely day for early release. In other words, if much of the faculty can’t attend because of the school’s present schedule, the school will want to revisit that issue.

The accreditation process is a wonderful continuous school improvement model. Now that the school has experienced the new format, staff members should begin to think in terms of how they will respond to this experience, commendations, and

recommendations. Use this experience as a framework for future efforts. School competencies such as data analysis, an understanding of assessment practices, clear communication through the presentation of data (graphs, tables, narrative, etc.) are also developed through the school's participation.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Standard I – Educational Program

This standard is met. Monument Valley High School's instructional and organizational practices, as well as its policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society.

Standard II – Student Personnel Services

This standard is met. Student personnel services are designed to give systematic assistance to students. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled.

Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met. The school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs, and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere.

Standard IV – Library Media Program

This standard is met. The school library media program is a primary resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. A certified library media teacher provides instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information.

Standard V – Records

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

This standard is met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah and are properly endorsed for the subjects they are assigned.

Standard VIII – Administration

This standard is met. The administration of Monument Valley High School provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary administrative procedures.

Standard IX – Teacher Load

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or Northwest.

Standard X – Activities

This standard is met. Monument Valley High School supports a range of activities that supplement the basic instructional program by providing additional experiences and opportunities for learning to take place.

Standard XI – Business Practices

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical area for follow-up/*

The plan is adequate in that the issues of follow-up are addressed.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The Visiting Team is convinced that the school leadership and the majority of the staff are committed to the action plan. It was also evident, when the team met with the Community Council, that parents on the council were committed to the plan.

The Visiting Team is concerned, however, about the commitment level to the plan as new teachers join the faculty. Based upon the school's history of teacher turnover (mostly due to the area's isolation and lack of social opportunities, especially for single teachers), it will be vital for the school principal to include the process of improvement and the goals of the plan during the induction of new teachers.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The follow-up process in the action plan is sufficient. However, the Visiting Team reminds the school that it must stay vigilant in focusing on and following through with this plan. The Visiting Team suggests that the action plan be reviewed often, and that evidence and data be collected often to show progress.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the administration and staff of Monument Valley High for completing the accreditation self-study process and for making the process an opportunity to focus on improvement.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for creating a community center and for inviting community members to be a part of the school.
- The Visiting Team commends Monument Valley High for initiating and implementing Navajo culture and language classes, and for involving elders from the community.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for the improvement that has occurred with student achievement levels.

- The Visiting Team commends the Monument Valley High School teaching staff and support staff for creating a caring and inviting school culture.
- The Visiting Team commends the school's involvement with the greater community, including efforts with Navajo chapter house meetings.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration of the school for providing supportive and collaborative leadership.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school design and implement a comprehensive and focused professional development plan that aligns completely with the mission, beliefs, DRSLs, and action plan. It is further recommended that training in Backward Design and the use of data be included in that plan.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration and faculty utilize assessment and testing data to drive instruction. In other words, continually utilize formative content assessments to show who is learning and who is not learning so that instruction can be adjusted to meet the needs of the learners. Effective assessment is part of learning.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the School Leadership Team (SLT) stay in place as a functioning leadership team to continually assess the learning needs of the school and to oversee the implementation of the professional development plan and action plan.
- The Visiting Team recommends that time be set aside weekly for teacher collaboration. This collaboration should focus on analyzing data, designing research-based instructional strategies, and other professional development. This time should not conflict with other school activities, and there should be an expectation of 100 percent staff participation.
- The Visiting Team reminds all Monument Valley High stakeholders that this accreditation self-study process is the beginning and not the end. The self-study is the beginning of ongoing and embedded improvement efforts that are focused upon student achievement.